

School inspection report

12 to 14 November 2024

Eastbourne College

Old Wish Road

Eastbourne

East Sussex

BN21 4JX

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

Contents

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS	3
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS THE STANDARDS.....	4
RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS	4
SECTION 1: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE.....	5
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE	5
SECTION 2: QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	6
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	7
SECTION 3: PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING	8
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING	9
SECTION 4: PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY.....	10
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY	11
SAFEGUARDING	12
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING	13
SCHOOL DETAILS	14
INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL.....	15
INSPECTION DETAILS	16

Summary of inspection findings

1. Governors assure themselves that the Standards are met by effective scrutiny and monitoring of the school's practice and procedures. Leaders and managers have the required knowledge and skills and fulfil their responsibilities effectively in promoting the wellbeing of pupils. Leaders have an accurate view of the strengths and areas for further development of the school which is informed by systematic self-evaluation and the views of pupils.
2. Leaders have an effective understanding of physical, welfare and safeguarding risks and respond with urgency and diligence to areas of risk. Pupils make good progress in their studies because of the plentiful support available to them. The school is successfully developing systems to monitor, track and identify pupils who are underperforming. However, the roles and responsibilities of staff in addressing the needs of pupils who are underperforming academically is unclear.
3. The curriculum is suitably broad and is designed to meet the needs and aptitudes of all pupils. The aesthetic and creative areas are embedded in school life with a commitment, knowledge and enthusiasm demonstrated among pupils and teachers. Pupils respond to this provision by producing work and performances of very high quality and that contribute considerably to the culture of the school. The very broad provision in this area is carefully and effectively designed so that pupils of all abilities and interests can access and benefit from it. The aesthetic and creative provision, within the combined departments of art, dance, drama, music, design technology, photography, and ceramics, is a significant strength of the school.
4. The school enables pupils to develop their spiritual and moral understanding, self-knowledge, self-esteem, and self-confidence. The arrangements in place ensure that pupils are well cared for. As a result, pupils are confident in expressing themselves and in respecting each other. The vast majority of pupils understand the need to follow school rules. Leaders successfully identify and address any patterns of negative behaviour. Consequently, behaviour is typically good, and bullying is rare.
5. Leaders have created a welcoming and supportive boarding environment. which is successful in fostering pupils' personal development. Pupils learn to co-exist effectively and respond to the needs of others. Pupils have appropriate knowledge of the range of people they can contact should they have any issues.
6. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their lives. They are well versed in financial issues and are tolerant and respectful to those from different backgrounds. Careers education is comprehensive so that pupils can make well-informed choices.
7. All staff are appropriately trained in safeguarding and are aware of their responsibilities in this area. Leaders respond appropriately to any safeguarding issues that arise, liaising with parents and external agencies appropriately. Recruitment checks are carried out effectively. Pupils are taught how to stay safe, including when online. Appropriate arrangements are in place to monitor and filter use of the internet.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- clarify roles and responsibilities in the school with regard to addressing the needs of pupils who are underperforming academically to strengthen the support that they receive.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

8. Leaders and managers have the required knowledge and skills and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, including actively promoting the wellbeing of pupils. Governors assure themselves that the Standards are met by effective scrutiny and monitoring of the school's practice and procedures. Their understanding of the school is informed through frequent visits to the school, regular surveys of pupils and by receiving comprehensive reports. They provide appropriate challenge and support to leaders.
9. Leaders have an accurate view of the strengths and areas for further development of the school and consider carefully the impact their actions have on pupils' wellbeing and success. They are informed by reflective approaches to formulating strategy and methodical and detailed self-evaluation. Leaders consistently take into account the views of pupils when devising and implementing their plans.
10. There is variation within and across academic departments in the way they track, monitor and record pupils' academic performance. Leaders are currently developing more consistent systems to identify pupils who are underperforming. However, the roles and responsibilities of staff across the school in addressing the needs of these pupils is unclear.
11. Leaders ensure that new members of the school undergo an effective induction process allowing them to settle in quickly and understand the school's expectations and procedures. Boarding routines and practice are well communicated. This enables new pupils to readily benefit from staff who are well trained in boarding provision.
12. Leaders manage any parental complaints appropriately and keep thorough records of these and any actions taken by the school in response. Boarders understand how to raise any concerns they have. Complaints are dealt with within the timeframes stated in the school's policy. Leaders monitor and address any patterns of concerns effectively.
13. Parents receive reports regularly about pupils' progress, attitudes and attainment. All other required information, including the school's aims and ethos, is made available to parents, largely through the school's informative website.
14. Leaders have a comprehensive and robust approach to risk management. An appropriate critical incident plan is in place. Leaders have an effective understanding of physical, welfare and safeguarding risks and respond with urgency and diligence to areas of risk. Risk assessments identify potential risks thoroughly and detail appropriate steps taken to reduce or remove these. Leaders systematically monitor risk assessments to check their continued effectiveness.
15. Leaders have developed a detailed accessibility plan that includes actions to facilitate the access to the premises for any pupils with a disability. Pupils' needs have been well considered and this has resulted in pupils having increased ability to access the curriculum and the school's facilities. For example, all of the school's computers can convert electronic documents into audio format. The school fulfils its duties under the Equality Act (2010). No pupils are discriminated against, including by teaching or the curriculum.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

16. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

17. The school provides a well-rounded curriculum that effectively spans mathematical, scientific and technological studies, along with speaking, listening, literacy, and numeracy, which is appropriate to pupils' ages and aptitude. The curriculum is designed to meet the individual needs of pupils including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who are gifted and talented. The wide range of subjects are supported by detailed schemes of work that identify key learning points and plan effectively for pupils' progression.
18. Teaching in modern foreign languages prepares pupils well for examination requirements and develops pupils' ability to understand different languages in a wide variety of day-to-day situations. Pupils make good progress in spoken and written expression from their starting points.
19. The aesthetic and creative areas are embedded in school life with a commitment, knowledge and enthusiasm demonstrated among pupils and teachers. Senior leaders and those leading the departments, promote pupils' creative and aesthetic learning and understanding extremely well through lessons and extra-curricular activities. Pupils develop artistic skills to a very high level, and their artistic work and aesthetic reflection are of a very high standard and highly valued by the school. Pupils respond to this provision with a deep understanding of aesthetics and intellectual ideas about creativity that are taught through the school's curriculum. The provision in this area promotes pupils to aspire to direct devised pieces independently within their houses and take ownership of artistic presentations to the school. This provision has been designed with sufficient breadth so that pupils of all abilities and interests can benefit from it.
20. Teaching is engaging, purposefully paced, well planned and adopts an effective range of teaching strategies. Teachers' secure subject knowledge and understanding of examination specifications enables them to plan lessons that challenge pupils to raise their attainment and make good progress. Examination criteria feature in the planning of tasks, so that pupils develop the knowledge and skills required to succeed in these. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well during lessons so that classrooms are calm and orderly, allowing pupils to focus on their learning.
21. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their needs met effectively. The department for provision for pupils who have SEND advises teachers on strategies they can use to meet these pupils' needs and also provides pupils with specialist support when required. Consequently, pupils who have SEND make good progress from their starting points.
22. Leaders ensure that pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are supported with specialist assistance towards their acquisition of and fluency in English when required. Teachers are informed which pupils require additional support for their English and provided with strategies to supply such support. As a result, pupils who speak EAL learn effectively and make good progress.
23. A thoughtfully designed reporting system enables parents to understand their child's performance in each subject. Written comments identify helpful targets for future development and a data 'dashboard' helps parents to understand their child's performance.
24. Pupils' participation in the extensive range of recreational activities, encompassing sports, creativity and service, enables pupils to build on previously gained skills and develop new ones in a wide range of curricular and extra-curricular areas.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation

25. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

26. The school offers a well-rounded curriculum that allows pupils to develop self-knowledge and confidence effectively. Lessons provide frequent opportunities for pupils to reflect on their performance and encourage pupils to become self-motivated and take ownership of their endeavours. Staff encourage pupils to reflect on their growth, fostering a sense of self-worth. Events organised by the 'BeYou' pupil action group help to create a sense of belonging for pupils from minority groups. Pupils cite adaptations to jewellery, hair and uniform rules as making them feel that their traditions and identities are accepted by the school.
27. The religious studies programme enables pupils to develop their understanding of different major faiths and their spiritual perspectives on life. Spiritual themes are also raised for pupils to reflect on, such as during chapel gatherings.
28. The school's extensive physical education (PE) and sports programme, including non-competitive options like the pilates, aerobics and walking (PAW) option, ensures all pupils have access to activities that suit their interests and develop their abilities in particular areas. For example, pupils have the opportunity to develop their skills in areas such as mountain biking, sailing and dance. All pupils learn to swim.
29. The provision of relationships and sex education (RSE) and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education affords pupils relevant, specific and age-appropriate guidance. Topics covered include consent and stress management. The programme is delivered with appropriate sensitivity.
30. There are clear expectations around behaviour, supported by robust policies, procedures and the assiduous record keeping by the leadership of the school. Leaders have identified that some pupils have exhibited behaviour that has fallen below expectations and have taken effective measures to improve this and support these pupils' social development. Leaders implement appropriate measures to prevent bullying and respond to the rare incidents that do arise.
31. The main school site, adjacent buildings and the boarding houses are kept secure. Health and safety procedures are effective and involve the systematic checking and servicing of equipment.
32. Fire safety arrangements are effective. Staff are suitably trained in managing risks associated with fire. There are up to date fire risk assessments and regular fire drills in school and boarding houses, including during boarding time, are carried out and recorded. Boarders are taught what to do during an evacuation whilst in the boarding house.
33. Supervision is effective. There are always teachers and staff available, including during evenings and weekends. Staff are aware of the location of boarders at all times.
34. The school has robust processes in place to promote high attendance and follow up any absenteeism. The school maintains suitable attendance and admissions registers in line with current statutory guidance. Leaders inform the local authority of any pupils who join or leave the school at non-standard times of transition.

35. Leaders ensure that the medical care provision for pupils is effective, such as by enabling a local doctor to visit four times a week. The medical centre is suitably equipped. The vast majority of staff are trained in first aid. First aid boxes are suitably placed and updated.
36. Leaders have created a supportive and friendly boarding environment. This is achieved, in part, through an effective induction process for new boarders and supportive boarding staff in the houses. Pupils are informed of the range of people they can contact should they have any issues. Boarders can communicate readily with family and friends at home. Suggestions and complaints are handled appropriately, and outcomes communicated effectively to pupils so that pupils' views are heard. Boarders are provided with a healthy diet comprising a range of tasty options. They have ready access to snacks outside of mealtimes
37. Prefects are given appropriate responsibilities that develop leadership skills. This role includes older boarders supervising younger pupils' prep, as well as helping out in the evening. This fosters positive relationships and respect between pupils. Clear expectations on conduct underpin such roles.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

- 38. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

39. Leaders utilise the curriculum effectively to develop pupils' understanding of the importance of mutual respect and other British values, such as fair treatment, the rule of law, individual liberty and democracy. Schemes of work across the range of subjects map out where such values will be focused on and discussed, as they relate to the specific subject. For example, pupils studying French linked their studies to themes explored as part of Black History Month, by considering French citizens from African backgrounds who have made a positive impact on recent history and culture. Consequently, pupils explore why laws and rules are necessary and appropriate ways for a democratic society to uphold the law. Such discussions contribute to pupils understanding the school's rules and expectations, pupils' moral understanding and appreciation of the value of upholding the rule of law. They take responsibility for the various roles they play within the school, and they behave with compassion and understanding towards their peers, including those with protected characteristics.
40. The PSHE curriculum fosters pupils' economic awareness effectively. Pupils learn about considerations such as how to budget, how different types of taxes work, methods of saving, student finance and managing debt. Older pupils learn about how the stock market operates and about the dangers of gambling.
41. The school's promotion of British values instils tolerance and respect. For example, in PSHE, pupils explore themes relating to equality, inclusion and diversity. Pupils look at ways of behaving and expressing views, so that respect for others is clearly demonstrated. There is careful consideration of the dangers of extremism and the importance of acknowledging peoples' cultural and personal identity.
42. Careers guidance is comprehensive and effective, starting with presentations of careers options in Year 9 PSHE lessons and extending to support sessions for specific skills such as CV writing and interview preparation. Pupils benefit from ready access to an online careers education platform and input from external speakers and careers advisors. Older pupils are provided with information about academic and vocational options and are supported effectively in making applications, whether for university entrance, apprenticeships or other first steps in the workplace. The school provides clear, impartial and up-to-date guidance about the nature and requirements of different careers, developing pupils' ability to make informed choices for their futures. In careers events, pupils interact with local alumni and industry professionals, broadening their career awareness. This exposure challenges preconceptions of stereotypes and helps ensure that the guidance given remains current.
43. . The Combined Cadet Force (CCF) and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme (DofE) activities foster responsibility, teamwork and resilience. Leaders encourage the pupils to contribute to others in the school and the wider community, and actively provide them with the means to do so. For example, pupils work in partnership with those from other local schools to contribute to the Coastal Schools Partnership.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

44. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

45. Safeguarding arrangements are effective and reflect the requirements of current statutory guidance. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities respond promptly and appropriately to any safeguarding concerns that arise. They consult with external safeguarding partners and refer safeguarding concerns to them when appropriate. Suitable arrangements for the handling of allegations against staff or senior leaders are in place. These are well understood by staff and followed when required. Leaders keep suitable records of safeguarding concerns and the decisions and actions taken in response to these.
46. Governors maintain an effective overview of the safeguarding policy and procedures. The governor with particular responsibility for safeguarding conducts a thorough and detailed termly audit of safeguarding practice at the school. All governors undertake training in safeguarding.
47. Safeguarding induction and training for staff, including that for the safeguarding team, are thorough, regular and in line with local requirements. Leaders provide safeguarding updates and scenario-based training for all staff, followed by quizzes to review understanding. Staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and know how to escalate concerns when required. A suitable induction process is in place to ensure that new staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities.
48. Leaders are aware of the contextual risks and challenges facing pupils beyond the school, including risks relating to radicalisation and extremism. This understanding is used to inform staff training and the development of the PSHE curriculum.
49. Leaders provide a number of ways for pupils to raise any concerns that they might have. Pupils are informed whom they can go to should they wish to share any concerns. The availability and the role of the school's independent listener are known to boarders.
50. Leaders ensure that all appropriate safer recruitment checks on adults who work with pupils or reside in boarding houses are made in a timely manner and accurately recorded in a suitable single central record of appointments (SCR). Staff files are well organised.
51. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Suitable internet filtering and monitoring procedures are in place and any alerts are immediately reviewed by members of the safeguarding team who take action as required.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

- 52. All the relevant Standards are met.**

School details

School	Eastbourne College
Department for Education number	845/6014
Registered charity number	307071
Address	Eastbourne College Old Wish Road Eastbourne East Sussex BN21 4JX
Phone number	01323 452300
Email address	reception@eastbourne-college.co.uk
Website	https://www.eastbourne-college.co.uk
Proprietor	Eastbourne College Incorporated
Chair	Mrs Nicky Eckert
Headteacher	Mr Tom Lawson
Age range	13 to 18
Number of pupils	621
Number of boarding pupils	271
Date of previous inspection	18 May 2023

Information about the school

53. Eastbourne College is an independent co-educational day and boarding school situated in a residential area of Eastbourne. The school is a registered charity administered by a board of governors.
54. Boarders' accommodation consists of five houses on the main school site, two houses for female pupils and three for male pupils.
55. The school has identified 177 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
56. English is an additional language for 101 pupils.
57. The school aims to provide a balanced education that equips pupils to be happy and successful through school and later life. It further aims for all pupils to enjoy learning through encouraging creativity and inspiring them to be ambitious. It seeks to do these through the shared values of the pursuit of excellence, participation, integrity, and kindness.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

12 to 14 November 2024

58. A team of ten inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

59. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration and chapel
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other governors
- discussions with the head, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- visits to boarding houses accompanied by pupils and staff
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

60. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

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For more information, please visit isi.net